

W5YI

Nation's Oldest Ham Radio Newsletter

REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable. May be reproduced providing credit is given to The W5YI Report.

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VECs Hold 1996 Annual Conference

Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (VECs) from all over the United States converged on Gettysburg, PA July 18th for their annual two day conference. The thirteen VEC organizations in attendance represented nearly all of the operator license examinations administered in the Amateur Service. Only three smaller VECs (Jefferson/New Orleans VEC, Anchorage/Alaska VEC and Koolau/Hawaii VEC) did not attend meeting.

The purpose of the conference is to agree on future license testing parameters, VE/VEC procedures and to meet with the Federal Communications Commission. All VECs operate under a *Memorandum of Agreement* with the FCC. The activities of each VEC are guided by the Communications Act, especially Part 97 and a set of internally generated VEC operating instructions which are also submitted to -- and approved by -- the FCC.

The conference was chaired by CAVEC's Don Tunstill, president of the NCVEC, Inc. (National Conference of VECs, Inc.) The Thursday meeting was essentially a business meeting.

The conference started out with a visit to the newly refurbished FCC licensing facility in Gettysburg. Most of the building's previous walls and offices have been moved and renovated. And all of the older office equipment have been replaced with sparkling new modular furniture in a cubicle type arrangement. The improvement was very impressive.

Interactive Vanity Call Sign Requests

FCC's Judy Dunlap and Donna Scott took the VECs into a new conference room and demonstrated a new interactive Internet "Vanity" call sign filing procedure. Any amateur (or their representative) will be able to request a new "Vanity" call sign by accessing a web page located at the FCC's web site. It is planned to have this new "Electronic Form FCC 610-V" procedure operational by the time that Gate No. 2 opens. Gate 2 permits Extra Class amateurs to request a new station call sign upon payment of a \$30.00 "regulatory" fee.

To submit an electronic "Vanity" call sign request, amateurs may merely access the appropriate Internet web page located at the FCC's "<http://www.fcc.gov>" website. You then key in information that is very similar to that contained on the paper copy of FCC Form 610-V, Vanity Call Sign application document.

Section 1 of the electronic form contains your name, date-of-birth, address and current amateur station call sign which you wish to change. Section 2 is where you list your choice of up to twenty-five "vanity" call signs in order of preference. Your signature is electronically affixed by typing in the "Date signed."

Payment of the \$30.00 regulatory fee is by credit card. You simply key your VISA or MasterCard account number into the secure (encrypted)

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electronic FCC 610-V form and the amount is credited to the U.S. government by the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh, PA. You also get a "Submission Confirmation" (which you can print out) as soon as you transmit the "Vanity" call sign information to the FCC.

A ten digit confirmation number (the example we saw was No. 9607185999 - which represents the date: July 18, 1996 and the sequential number: 5999) will appear on the "Submission Confirmation" form which can be printed out. The first assignable "Vanity" call sign from the applicant's list is then immediately issued by the FCC. We were told that the date determines the order in which the "Vanity" call sign request is processed ...and not necessarily the sequential number.

In response to a question as to when the "Electronic Vanity Call Sign Request" form would be ready, we were told that everything was ready now except the credit card encryption mechanism. In any event, this interactive procedure is scheduled to be available when Gate 2 opens. We were told that the exact date had not yet been determined but that the preliminary plans were to announce the opening of Gate 2 in the next couple of weeks with a planned "gate opening" around the end of August or the beginning of September. It was firmly emphasized that this was only a rough "estimate."

Another Internet "fcc.gov" website project that the FCC is working on is the "Amateur Radio Database Query." Amateurs will be able to type in certain information (such as name, zip codes or call sign) and the FCC's computer will search for and display the requested record ...or a range of records. This means that "Vanity" call sign applicants will be able to "query" the FCC's computer to determine which call sign was issued.

The Thursday VEC business meeting saw reports being given by the Question Pool Committee Chairman (Ray Adams/N4BAQ), the Rules Committee (Fred Maia/W5YI) and the Instructions Committee (R. C. Smith/W6RZA.) Fred Maia also gave a presentation on ways to better fund the conference and its activities. Fred proposed that funding to help defray NCVEC expenses could come from the handling of all amateur service license renewals and modifications. A fee would be charged, the proceeds of which would be used to defray NCVEC expenses.

Gordon West (WB6NOA) and Jim Lyons (N2WSN) of AMECO discussed "VECs and the Media." It was agreed that VECs need to do a better job of publicizing their activities and this will be pursued by the NCVEC. Both Gordo and AMECO have well known amateur radio license preparation manuals. Also covered was the fact that VECs can now legally sell license preparation materials and equipment to their VE teams and examinees.

NCVEC president, Don Tunstill publicly presented Gordon West, WB6NOA with an award for his long-term

contributions to amateur radio and to the VEC System - especially to the Question Pool Committee.

Electronic filing of renewals/modifications

The FCC has issued a waiver permitting the VECs to handle all amateur service license renewals and modifications - not just applications involving examinations. A July 16th Order responds to "...requests from several amateur operators, to allow volunteer-examiner coordinators (VECs) to file, on their behalf, license renewal applications and modification applications (indicating change of name, change of mailing address, and change of call sign) electronically." VECs will not be required to participate in this program and: "The Commission also will continue to accept applications filed manually (via hard copy)."

The FCC said that the *Communications Act of 1934* currently permits the VECs to electronically process the Form 610 applications of Amateur Radio examinees. "[But] the available software, hardware, procedures and experience can similarly eliminate delays in processing of license renewal and modification applications."

"Although electronic filing of applications for license renewal or modification is not a license examination preparation or administration function, we will permit any VEC to perform this additional function on behalf of amateur operators because such action is procedural in nature. We nonetheless will consider such activity to be separate from their responsibilities as VECs and require that, if provided, it be at no cost to the Government. In this connection, the compensation, if any, the organization receives as a result of providing this service is a matter that is between the amateur operators choosing to use the organization's services and the organization."

"In view of the above, we find good cause for waiver of the Commission's Rules to allow any FCC Form 610 to be filed electronically by VECs. Consistent with existing procedures, when the data is forwarded electronically, the VEC must retain the actual FCC Form 610 documents for at least fifteen months and make them available to the FCC upon request."

Second day of the VEC conference

There were several FCC officials in attendance at Friday's meeting. Attending from Gettysburg, PA licensing facility were Gary Stanford (W4FDP), Walt Boswell, John Chudovan, Larry Weikert, Judy Dunlap and Donna Scott. John B. Johnston (W3BE), Bill Cross (AA3DI) and Tom Fitz-gibbon drove in from FCC headquarters in Washington, DC.

Private Wireless Division Chief Bob McNamara (N1KHF) was unable to attend the VEC conference since he was at another industry meeting in which he was being honored with an award. Ralph Haller (N4RH),

previous WTB Deputy Bureau Chief has retired from the FCC and is now working in private practice.

Johnny Johnston gave the primary address to the VECs. He began by discussing the status of the Vanity call sign program. He thanked the VECs for spreading the word about the new system. The second gate (actually Gate 1A) opened Monday (July 22) and provides ham clubs the opportunity to obtain the call sign of a deceased former member.

"For this gate, this club must have held a club station call sign license grant on the day that issuing club station licenses resumed: March 24, 1995. If your club was not licensed on March 24th, you will have to wait until your license trustee becomes eligible under a later gate. For an Amateur Extra Class operator, that opportunity arrives at Gate 2," he said.

Johnston also congratulated the VECs for their "...superb effort in electronic filing" of amateur radio Form 610 applications. "You are proving that Government and the private sector can work together.

"A lot of people still seem to think that all there is to licensing is to receive an application and issue a license form. But there is still that little matter of keeping records of those transactions. The amateur service has come to be the first service to use electronic filing and data base authorization. I think this record speaks very well for you and your service. We know that the amateur community is making its data base accessible online. Not only does this further cut the delay before a new ham can get on the air, it also helps with your self-policing. Just the accessibility to knowledge of the license status of transmitting stations must help discourage unlicensed stations from operating on the amateur service bands."

Telecommunications Act of 1996

The so-called "Chinese wall" designed to separate amateur radio business activities from VEC examinations is now unneeded. "...the [previous] law prohibited publishers and manufacturers and their employees from being VEs or VECs. Its purpose probably was to prevent the appearance of favoritism toward examinees who buy certain manuals or equipment. All of your exams, however, draw from the same pools. It seems highly unlikely that anyone could unfairly benefit. The most controversial unintended consequence was to prohibit instructors from administering examinations when they distributed manuals to their students. That is now a thing of the past. Publishers, manufacturers and their employees can now administer examinations.

"Secondly, you and the VEs had to keep records of your expenses and to annually certify them. ...The maximum allowable examination reimbursement fee (\$6.07) should be enough to keep expenses necessary and prudent."

Question Pool Committee (QPC) controversy

"Your question writers and the QPC not only need to consider the contemporary duties of an amateur operator, they must also keep abreast of the latest trends as well as keep a sharp eye out for future developments. To help you meet this need, the rules require all VECs to cooperate in maintaining one common question pool for each written examination element and to make those pools publicly available. You have at your disposal an unbeatable resource to work on the question pools. You can tap into all of the wisdom and knowledge that collectively resides within the amateur service community. ...

"The rules do not provide you with a specific how-to procedure for maintaining the pools. This is due, at least in part, to the fine work carried out by your QPC. The QPC is a practical way of mobilizing that vast reservoir within the amateur service. The pools tell persons interested in the amateur service just what it is they need to know about in order to join in. The pools tell them the questions they will be asked to answer no matter where they take the exam. ...

"We were distressed to learn that a dispute arose over membership in the QPC. We were even sorrier to learn that you were unable to resolve the matter amongst yourselves. We deeply regretted having to intrude. We hope that our request did not in any way mislead anyone into thinking that a signal was being sent out announcing that the FCC was going to micro-manage the VEC system. We further hope that it did not offer encouragement for you to bring your disputes to the FCC for resolution.

"So who does get to be on the QPC? The answer to that question has to come from the VECs... all of them. The QPC is a creation of the VECs to serve at the pleasure of the VECs. What the FCC has said is that it is inconsistent with the rules for any VEC to be excluded from helping maintain the pools because of a lack of membership in any organization. Each VEC is obligated to cooperate in maintaining one common question pool. No other VEC or group of VECs can take that away."

Electronic filing from the exam room

"Can the Form 610 data be filed electronically right from the exam room? The short answer is 'Of course.' The rules do not specify any particular place from where the data must be forwarded to the FCC. Please note, however, Section 97.519(b) requires the coordinating VEC to collect the Form 610 documents from the VEs, screen them, and -- for qualified examinees -- forward electronically, the data contained on the applications to the FCC. ...

"Electronic filing from the exam room should result in speedier service to successful examinees. Days or even weeks of paper flow are avoided. Moreover,

discrepancies in the documents can be resolved on the spot, avoiding further delay. Let's answer these questions:

- 1) Can a VEC person electronically file the Form 610 data with the FCC from the exam room?
- 2) Even if the VEC person is also a VE? Of course, except that when electronically filing, the person is then acting in the capacity of a VEC person, not as a VE.
- 3) Does the VEC person have to screen the data and resolve discrepancies before filing it? Of course."

VE team accountability

"We continue to encounter terms like 'Team Leader' or 'Team manager' in connection with the VEC system. These terms are not used in the rules. They seem to have great meaning, however, within the amateur service community. As the VEC system has evolved over the past 13 years, the VEs have very conspicuously organized themselves into teams and team leaders. It probably is more productive for one member to perform the ministerial functions for the team. There seems to be widespread misunderstanding -- as to the scope and areas of accountability of the members of VE teams who function in various capacities.

"The three VEs who certify that they have complied with the administering VE requirements are jointly and individually accountable for the proper administration of each and every examination element reported on the FCC Form 610. They, and they alone, are accountable persons of record.

"Accountability cannot be delegated to another VE, including a VE that serves as its team leader. Accountability cannot be delegated to the VEC that coordinates the examinations session. It is the three VEs who sign the certification form who are ultimately accountable for the proper administration of an examination. Their decisions cannot be overridden by a team leader or by the VEC.

"Based upon what we have been told, it is clear that it is a widespread practice for certifying VEs to delegate administration of certain elements of the examination to other persons. Such delegation is not provided for in the rules. The certifying VEs may need to be reminded, however, that even though they delegate their authority to other persons, they cannot delegate their accountability. ...The VEs' area of responsibility do not include filing Forms 610 with the FCC, either by mail or electronically. That responsibility lies with the coordinating VEC."

Unraveling Certifying VEs, Proctoring VEs, Support VEs, VE Team Leaders/Liaison ...and the VEC Agent.

"So based upon what we have been told by the VEs, I will tell you of my expectation of what I will find if

and when I ever get into one of those mysterious exam sessions. I expect to find three **Certifying VEs**. I will know that they are the Certifying VEs because they will be busy signing the certification on the Form 610. I will wonder if they understand that they, and they alone, are jointly and individually accountable for the proper administration of each and every examination element reported on that Form 610.

I would not be at all surprised to find some **Proctoring VEs**. These persons might actually be doing the administering and grading of the examination elements. I will wonder if they understand that they are doing this work under the authority delegated to them by the Certifying VEs and that they are accountable only to the Certifying VEs who have delegated their authority. Their presence is not contemplated by the rules. The rules anticipated that their work is carried out by the Certifying VEs. Therefore, I would hope to find that these persons are otherwise qualified to be VEs.

"I might find a **Team Leader**. This would be the person who performs ministerial functions for the team. **The Team Leader also would be serving at the pleasure of the Certifying VEs.** Neither the Team Leader's presence nor his or her activities are contemplated by the rules, although that is something that some of you have recommended and the Commission has under consideration.

"I might also find a **Team Liaison** person. This would be the person who conducts, for the team, liaison with the coordinating VEC. Also on hand might be an agent or representative of the VEC. Maybe the VEC person is there to make doubly sure that everything is in order. Or maybe to collect and screen the completed Forms 610 and resolve all of the discrepancies right there on the spot. When that is completed, the **VEC Agent** might electronically forward the data to the FCC. Any one person may be wearing two or more of these hats. We have no problem with that as long as you make clear to all concerned -- especially to yourself -- which of the hats you are wearing at any given instance."

Also on Friday, Arlene Cooksey, N5YLT gave a presentation on how the W5YI-VEC handles electronic filing from the exam room.

Special Event "One-by-One" Call Signs

Johnny Johnston briefly discussed the ad hoc **Special Event Call Sign System**. He said it "...doesn't have anything to do with the VEC System, but I am sure that you are getting the same questions that we are. The FCC has not decided on whether or not to proceed with the proposal for Gettysburg to administer a special event call sign system. But there are stations on the air using one-by-one call signs. How did they get them?

"There used to be a rule stating that no request for

a specific call sign would be granted. That rule had to be dropped for the vanity call sign system, obviously. Also, in the vanity proceeding, you asked that we reserve the block of 750 one-by-one call signs for temporary use by your special event stations. You forgot to tell us *which* special events. So, in the sundry proceeding, we asked you what you considered special enough to warrant one of these rarest-of-all call signs. We didn't know if you have in mind such events as the Podunk Picklefest or if you want us to holdout for something really big like the Tri-Centennial in the year 2076.

"While this is pending, the League has requested or endorsed requests for one-by-one call signs for the International Peace Race, Youngstown Bi-Centennial, Convention of the Federation of Eastern Massachusetts Amateur Radio Associations, Olympics, dedication of the Tennessee Bicentennial Mall, Utah Centennial, Salmon Festival, Wright Brothers' First Flight, 35th Anniversary of the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Station, All Star Baseball Game, RadioSport Contest, 25th Anniversary of the Kennedy Center, California Bear Flag Sesquicentennial, the 75th anniversary of network broadcast radio, and 100th anniversary of the first Marconi transatlantic transmissions. We have been signing the requests as long as it causes us no work. What the League has been doing is preparing a grant document for each request that it supports and hand-carrying it around so that all we have to do is sign.

1995 and 1996 FCC Wish List

"Before I close, I am going to go over my 1995 and my 1996 'wish list' with you. In 1995...

1. We asked you to file the best possible comments in the sundry item WT Docket Number 95.57.
2. We wanted to learn what the legal basis could be for the VECs to accept applications for license grant modifications and renewals for electronic filing. I am still looking at that.
3. We wanted to learn which rules in Part 97 would need to be changed in order to allow such activity. The answer is Section 97.21, which requires an application document to be submitted to: FCC, 270 Fairfield Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325-7245.

In the interim, Gettysburg has issued an *Order* that waives Section 97.21 to allow - but not require -- the VEC organizations to offer that service to amateur operators. This would be a function separate from your VEC authority. Any compensation that your organization receives for this service must come from the amateur operator served. It is a matter between the organization providing the service and the amateur operator who chooses to use your services.

For both of these items, we would certainly like your input. Ideally, you would reach a consensus and propose something that could form the basis of a notice and comment rule making item.

4. We wanted to learn about any changes in the *Communications Act* that you might seek in order for you to be reimbursed for electronic filing of license grant modifications and renewals.

5. We wanted to learn about any changes in the *Communications Act* that you might seek in order to fund your activities. I think that one has been overcome by events.

Wish List for 1996

1. We need information on how the VEC System is doing. I used to tell you that every month. That is no longer possible. Even the statistics we have been using in our rule making items are from 1994. I suspect that there are trends and things happening out there that we should know about, but we do not know what they are. We have no idea as to how many persons you are examining, if any, or what classes, pass rates, or anything else. Information such as that adds great insight and credibility to your rulemaking items.

2. I want to learn if my perception of the typical exam team is correct.

3. Where the certifying VEs are delegating their authority for the actual administration of an examination element, I hope that you will remind them that they cannot delegate their accountability.

4. For *Notices of Proposed Rule Making* items that may have some impact on the exam system, we would like to have your comments on the record.

5. I would like you to think about this question: "Just how important is the passing of your examinations? I have been of the firm conviction that your exams are uncompromisingly important. When a person passes your exams, the skill level at which that person can operate a station properly in the United States has been firmly established by our amateur service community.

You and your VEs go to a lot of effort to provide an examination system that appears to provide abundant exam opportunities and practically instantaneous authorization. More and more, however, we are being presented with claims and arguments that there are other considerations that are more important than passing your exams. Your exams must be bypassed for this or that reason. The time has come when we must ask if the amateur service community believes that exams are relevant. We do not want to find ourselves in the position of trying to defend an outmoded assumption.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

• **Cellular Internet capability is on the way!** You will shortly be able to access the digital *Information Superhighway* from the analog asphalt variety. AT&T Wireless has a new cellular "PocketNet Phone" with a 3-line LCD display that can log into the Internet. Among other things, you will be able to access time and location sensitive information such as stock quotes, airline flight information and restaurant menus (and make a reservation) on the fly. The new phone will cost about \$500.

AT&T folded its wireless "PersonaLink" online and e-mail service due to too much competition from the Internet.

• Will home music recording on 3-inch miniature CDS instead of audio cassettes catch on? **We thought the MiniDisc was a dead issue, but it's back!** The MiniDisc was Sony's answer to 5-inch CDs. An advantage is that it can record as well as play.

Sony made a big push in 1993 to get the new format accepted, but it flopped. The mistake they made was to promote it to youngsters who couldn't afford \$750 hardware and \$16.99 blanks. Today MiniDiscs have all but disappeared from the marketplace. But they are on the way back!

This time they will be promoted to the older more affluent consumer. The cost is now down to \$599 and blank (74 minute) MiniDiscs will list for \$9.99 (or 3 for \$21.99). Sony has already started the TV advertising. MiniDiscs sell very well in Japan.

And RCA and Toshiba have both started promoting DVD (digital video disc) players. A 5-inch DVD can hold 4.7 gigabytes per side - enough capacity for a two hour feature movie. A DVD player lists for around \$600. DVDs can also be used store music, games, and computer software.

• **Faster web-surfing! High speed ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) phone lines are getting cheaper ...and easier to install and configure.** The operate over regular copper wires at up to 128K/sec - about four times the speed of a 28.8 modem. Data compression gives you even faster speeds.

• **A Dick Tracy-like wrist phone has been unveiled** by Japan's Nippon Telegraph and Telephone. It uses cellular technology and features a voice-recognition system to "dial" phone numbers bypassing the need for ultra-tiny buttons.

• **The White House has given Netscape approval to distribute its more powerful 128-bit encryption scheme over the Internet.** Up until recently, the 128-bit code was available only by mail. The stronger encryption code is needed to insure that the exchange of credit card information across the Internet is secure. The new Netscape software can be downloaded to U.S. addresses only. Even so, you must verify online that you are a U.S. citizen. Download to foreign Internet addresses will be denied. A weaker 40-bit version has been cracked by hackers.

• **Surveillance "nanny-cams" (some implanted in Teddy Bears and clock radios) watch the babysitter** while the sitter watches your baby! The ACLU wants them outlawed as an invasion of privacy. They also maintain the laws prohibiting undisclosed audio taping should apply to video taping as well.

• Now that the Telecommunications Act is law, get ready for a deluge of telephone pitches! **Telemarketers have your telephone number ...even if it is unlisted!** They get them automatically from credit reports, warranty cards, whenever you call an 800 number ...and a myriad of other ways! You can block your telephone number on a per call basis, free of charge, by punching in *67 before making your call. You can't block your phone number to a toll-free number, however. The theory is: when a company pays for the call, they are entitled to your telephone number.

• **The cost of Direct Broadcast Satellite dishes is falling fast!** What used to be \$799 is now \$399! AT&T has a limited offer at that price ...also a \$399 *USA Today* ad ran during the Memorial Day weekend! Thomson had a monopoly in 1994, but no more. Many manufacturers (mostly from the orient) now compete in the DBS hardware marketplace. Three million American homes receive digital television through a dish! And five DBS programmers are now operating: USSB, Prime star, DirecTV, EchoStar and AlphaStar.

COMPUTERS & THE INTERNET

• **Bell Labs has figured out a way to create computer chips with circuits four times closer.** It eventually will mean smaller chips and/or increased performance.

• **Microsoft has a new mouse breed!** This one has a wheel between the two buttons to allow faster scrolling and zooming. It will be used primarily with Microsoft's Office and

Explorer browser software.

• **So far for IBM, the Olympics have been an absolute disaster!** IBM serves as the world-wide provider of information at the Olympic Games. Among other things, the "IBM Info '96" system was to send near instantaneous scoring, timing, and statistics from 29 venues to broadcast and news companies.

But it is agonizingly slow and the information frequently in error. Basically the system does not work and news organizations (such as the Associated Press and Reuters) are publicly criticizing IBM in various media distributed around the world! The International Olympic Committee is also extremely disappointed and surprised.

IBM anted up tens of millions of dollars to become both a U.S. and world-wide Olympic sponsor. Their "return on investment" was to let the world see the "new IBM."

• **The AP says "Every newspaper in America is terrified by 'CityScape.'"** The Microsoft online community guides will carry local listings, maps, restaurant and movie reviews, retail and classified ads and local news "...even city council agendas and school cafeteria menus."

To hasten the paperless newspaper, Microsoft is offering to share revenue with publishers that provide news and information. "You either cooperate, or they will do it themselves."

San Francisco, New York and San Diego will come online within six months. Top editors have been hired away from the nation's leading newspapers and magazines with "...fat pay packages."

• **WordPerfect (now owned by Corel) is back with a 32-bit version on a CD.** WordPerfect 7.0 includes a spread sheet (Quattro Pro), presentation software, an address book, on-the-fly spell checking and expanded graphics capability. A Netscape browser can be accessed directly from the WP toolbar.

Corel Corp. (Ottawa, Canada of "Corel Draw" fame) bought WordPerfect from Novel, Inc. (Provo, UT) at the fire-sale price of \$170 million - about \$1 billion less than Novel paid for the software company two years ago! (This newsletter is being produced using the new WordPerfect 7.0)

• **Be very careful when downloading from the Internet!** You could be inviting a virus. Use an antiviral product recommended by the National Computer Security Assn. A list is available at: <http://www.ncsa.com> (We use VirusScan from McAfee Associates.)

Microsoft has free clean-up and defensive software for macro viruses that may be imbedded

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in "Word" documents and e-mail available at: <http://www.microsoft.com/msword/>. The "Word" macro virus has reached epidemic proportions and is now the most prevalent virus in the world. It climbed to the "Top Ten" list in just six months, the fastest time ever.

- **The latest online usage figures!** IntelliQuest says that 35 million U.S. residents age 16 and over have accessed the Internet or an online service. Twenty million go online regularly more than 2 hours every week. And nine million logged on for the first time in 1996. (Based on a telephone survey of 5,000 people.)

- Voice communications over the Internet could become as popular as electronic mail! **Intel has free software that enables users to make long-distance telephone calls.** Some 30,000 people now can make basically free long-distance phone calls. That number could zoom to 30 million within a year as Netscape and Microsoft browsers ...and operating system software include the new "H.323" standard. Bottom line: Don't sign any long term contracts for low rate wire-line LD telephone service.

- "Spiders" are robot web page scanners - roaming and cataloging the Internet. **The newest searching wrinkle are called "Intelligent Agents."** Smart searching programs such as "Firefly" (a bright bug), WebWatcher, and WiseWire) catalog the user and return websites that are believed to interest you based on your prior selections. Their greatest advantage is in saving time finding future web pages that might interest you. "Firefly" was initially developed at MIT's Media Lab. (Check out: <http://www.firefly.com>; <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/webwatcher> (at Carnegie Mellon University) and <http://www.empirical.com>)

- The Wall Street Journal (July 24) reported that **Netcom On-Line Communications, Inc. reported a sharp loss** and may be interested in being taken over by another company. A shakeout among Internet access providers is underway due to "heavyweights" (like Microsoft, Bell Operating Companies, MCI, Sprint, AT&T ...and others) moving in. UUNet has already agreed to a takeover ...and PSINet is exploring options including the sale of the company.

Sprint is the latest to jump on the national ISP consumer bandwagon. Their pricing is expected to be \$19.95/month.

- **"Net Day" is going national.** California's volunteer effort to wire its school rooms to the Internet last March will expand to many

other states this fall. Clinton administration wants every classroom linked to the Internet by the year 2000.

They will be joined by several cable companies who will offer free Internet access via high-speed cable modems. The idea is to introduce young users to an emerging technology. AT&T will also provide schools with Internet access.

- **The American Association of Retired Persons has sent a "cyberfraud alert" out to its membership.** They warn of "quack health cures, phoney credit repair scams, pyramid schemes and illicit get-rich-quick deals." AARP adds, "...many scams on the Internet originate with users in other nations, where local laws often do not forbid the scams."

And watch out for tricksters requesting confirmations of your access codes, passwords, credit card and social security numbers.

- **Be on the lookout for "ShoppingLink" - a Web grocery shopping service.** Some big players (including Kroger) are participating. Consumers will be able to custom search huge product databases of up to 50,000 items. The search engine can even deliver the fat and calorie content. Delivery is a flat \$9.95 with payment by credit card ...or check upon delivery. "Electronic coupons" sold to product companies and offered online will be used to promote certain items.

WASHINGTON WHISPERS

- **FTC Chairman Robert Pitofsky is seeking voluntary Web rules.** He said at a two day Federal Trade Commission hearing that their authority extends only to fraud and deception. Among the voluntary controls suggested are bans on unsolicited e-mail that can't be automatically screened out, full and prominent disclosure of a marketer's identity, the rights of consumers to bar firms from selling or sharing information collected about them ...and limiting access to adult sites.

- The FCC has proposed requiring long-distance carriers to **divulge when their rates are more than 15% above an average** charged by AT&T, MCI and Sprint. The Commission is particularly concerned about higher hotel and pay phone rates. A voice message would disclose price information before the call is connected.

- **Both CompuServe and America Online are involved in class action suits.** One suit relating to its April 1996 initial public offering alleges CompuServe did not disclose

that its subscriber base and profitability were in jeopardy. CompuServe raised \$480 million when it went public. It also lost money for the first time.

Another suit questions America Online's business practices over a five year period. To settle the suit, AOL has agreed to give subscribers "free time." As of June 30, America Online had 6.2 million subscribers ...it plans to have 10 million by mid-1997.

- **FBI agents have swooped down on a Florida-based cable-piracy operation** that used a Cayman Islands bank to launder some \$10 million. The accused face 20 year prison sentences and \$500,000 fines. And the government wants return of the \$10 million.

"Operation Cabletrap" also netted the names of thousands of people who purchased cable converters that had special integrated circuits installed to illegally receive premium cable programming without payment. The New Jersey developer of the chip has already pleaded guilty to federal felony charges.

- A computer security expert says in a recent book that **we need a fourth military service.** "The Army handles the land, the Navy handles the water, the Air Force handles the space above. A Cyberforce is needed to handle IW ...information warfare."

- **Local telephone companies charge long distance carriers a fee to terminate a LD call.** The FCC is quietly looking into permitting local phone companies to charge a similar fee to Internet Service Providers. The FCC currently prohibits access charges on enhanced services as a way to promote innovative new communications. But Internet access has boomed to the point where it is now a universal activity. And Internet users need to pay their fair share of network use which is fast becoming clogged and slow.

- **The FCC has expanded and improved its Web pages** at <http://www.fcc.gov>. New Gettysburg licensing information has been added. Follow the Wireless Telecommunication Bureau's home page to "Office of Operations - Gettysburg."

- The FCC has mandated **new VHF aircraft radios with 25 kHz spacing effective January 1, 1997.** The use of spectrally efficient 25 kHz channeled VHF radios were authorized in 1972. In 1991, the FCC said they would eliminate the use of 50 kHz spacing by 1997. Such radios are usually found in private, single engine aircraft.

- **Reinventing government may include Internet electronic forums and voting**

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booths. Some 100,000 net surfers participated in "Reinventing America" political discussion groups over a six month period and even voted on a draft budget bill. The "Reinventing America Federal Reform" website was funded by a grant from The Markle Foundation.

AMATEUR RADIO

• **On July 12th we received a copy of an unsigned letter mailed to the FCC's Washington, DC Inspector General, H. Walker Feaster, III.** The Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts and supervises audits and investigations relating to FCC programs.

Mr. Feaster was appointed as the permanent IG on April 14, 1996 after an 18 month stint as Acting Inspector General. One of the primary duties of the OIG is to prevent and detect fraud and abuse in agency programs.

The unsigned letter was dated July 9 and carried a Trenton, New Jersey postmark. It mentions that a John R. Sheller, KN8Z (of Canal Winchester, Ohio) was recently issued the call sign "K8RZ" under Gate 1 of the "Vanity" call sign program. Gate 1 permits amateurs to reclaim a previously held call sign.

"John R. Sheller did, in fact, briefly hold the callsign K8RZ in the mid-1970's, that is until the Commission revoked K8RZ after determining that he had obtained the call as a result of bribery and fraud. The Commission found that Mr. Sheller had obtained K8RZ by paying money [\$100 sent to a secret post office box] to an FCC official. The incident led to the criminal conviction of Richard Zeigler..." It was a very messy scandal and Zeigler, the head licensing chief at FCC/Gettysburg, ended up being prosecuted and going to jail over the matter.

The letter writer commented, "The question arises: If your amateur station callsign was revoked following a determination that it had been obtained improperly through bribery and fraud on the Commission, are you now entitled to get it back under the Commission's 'Vanity' callsign program?"

We don't know who wrote the letter to the OIG. But one thing for certain, whoever it was...was very familiar with the inner workings of the FCC...and the sordid "ham call signs for sale" scandal that rocked the FCC some two decades ago.

On July 23rd, the FCC took action on the unsigned letter. FCC's Howard Davenport, Chief of the Wireless Telecommunication Bureau's Enforcement Division wrote Sheller:

"The grant of vanity call sign K8RZ on

June 28, 1996, is hereby set aside under Section 1.113(a) of the Commissions Rules. You are not eligible to receive K8RZ as a former holder because you never legitimately held that call sign. The Commission determined you obtained the call sign K8RZ through bribery. See John R. Sheller and John C. Gallucci, 70 FCC 2d 2260 (1979.) We have returned your application to pending status. Your call sign returns to KN8Z."

Not only did the FCC set aside Sheller's "Vanity" call sign, but also that of two former FCC employees who received their call sign through "favoritism." Frank Rose (Bowie, MD) was denied W3RO and reverted back to W3OWU. Arthur H. Feller (Fairfax, VA) was denied W4ART and returned to his previous call sign: KB4ZJ.

Section §1.113 of the FCC rules permits the commission to "...modify or set aside on its own motion" any action taken pursuant to delegated authority within a 30 day period.

• **Is the federal Government the number one enemy of Amateur Radio?** Or worse, is the U.S. going to sell the ham bands? You would sure think so if you read a July 1996 ARRL promotional mailer entitled "**Can Ham Radio Survive...**" Its objective is to increase membership among No Code Technicians: a class that, thus far, has shown little interest in joining the League.

The mailing piece tells how corporate interests "...at an FCC-sponsored meeting" are considering the 2-meter and 450-MHz ham bands for "...an expanded satellite communication service. **'...If you think the threat isn't serious, think again...'**" And "...did you know that our government is auctioning spectrum in an effort to offset the impacts of tax cuts and new spending programs? **The reduction in the gasoline tax will be financed by selling frequencies to commercial interests. ...And when the Feds go hunting for more frequencies to peddle, where do you think they'll look?**"

By the way, you can stay up to date on the supposed "Threats to Amateur Radio and WRC-97" by accessing the following website: <http://www.futureone.com/~tim/ac/>

• **A dispute has erupted involving Glenn Baxter's (K1MAN) "International Amateur Radio Network (IARN), Motorola and the American Red Cross.** It seems that two Motorola Divisions loaned 12 handheld transceivers and a repeater to IARN for use during the St. Thomas (U.S. Virgin Islands) hurricane "Marilyn" emergency last fall. Motorola maintains an inventory of emergency equipment for loan during national disasters.

On October 19th, 1995, IARN turned the equipment over to the St. Thomas Chapter of the American Red Cross. Strangely, IARN was subsequently requested by the Red Cross to leave the island. We asked Baxter about that and he said "it was a matter of petty politics."

On December 20th, 1995, Motorola requested that their equipment be returned so that it would be available for loan to others. IARN immediately asked Washington, DC Red Cross officials to have the Motorola equipment returned along with an IARN generator, antennas and other accessories.

The Red Cross responded by saying that they did not know the whereabouts of the equipment. Baxter believes that the repeater and some of the radios are at the Red Cross Chapter on St. Thomas and the remaining hand-helds were stolen. In any event, Motorola ended up donating the handheld radios to the Red Cross even though they don't know who has them. And the status of the repeater is still unknown.

On June 6th, 1996, Motorola wrote the St. Thomas Chapter of the American Red Cross "...that what started out to be a humanitarian service, has resulted in a misappropriation of our equipment."

• **Hurricane Bertha struck the U.S. Virgin Islands again last month** with 103 mph winds and four fatalities. Ham radio operators reported that a ship with 42 persons on board...had half of them missing. A Coast Guard search, however, could not find the vessel and it may have been a hoax. (From a news report)

• **Glenn Baxter's "American Amateur Radio Association" (AARA) is about to get off the ground.** The "for profit" business will be promoted during an on-air IARN bulletin service segment to be known as the *American Amateur Radio Forum* (AARF) as well as through a monthly newsletter called the *American Amateur Radio Digest* (AARD).

A July 16th "Working paper" says "AARA is the liberal party in amateur radio and will market amateur radio directly to the public nationwide through talk show appearances and other creative methods... AARA represents all those who are not members of ARRL, and we, therefore, represent the majority of radio amateurs."

AARA is in the process of hiring an Executive Director (it won't be K1MAN) and an August kick off is anticipated. The Executive Director will line up talk show guests, edit the AARD and appear weekly on the AARF.

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In addition, the Executive Director will establish AARA's field organization (consisting of State Directors and Section Managers) and recruit AARA club affiliations (especially schools) and individual memberships.

"AARA is an equity based business. It will eventually be incorporated and there may be a public offering of AARA stock to raise several million dollars necessary to carry out our long term business and marketing plan."

There will also be two non-profit sub groups called FAAR (*the Foundation for the Advancement of Amateur Radio*) and AARC, *the American Amateur Radio Council*. FAAR will seek grants and corporate sponsorships to fund various worthwhile projects; AARC, an advocacy group, will represent its membership in important regulatory matters.

ARMC (*Amateur Radio Management Consultants*) is a trade organization division that will assist (on a fee basis) amateur radio organizations, vendors and manufacturers.

The *International Amateur Radio Network* (IARN) will remain the same, but the bulletin service will be available to AARA. (Above information excerpted from AARA Working Paper No. GB-1.)

- **Capitalizing on the fact that over 70% of all licensed amateurs have a computer, Harlan Technologies will begin publishing CyberHam Magazine.** Gene (WB9MMM) and Shari (WB9SFT) Harlan plan to have their first issue (1,500 copies, 36-48 pages with a color cover) available in Sept. Special subscription price (until Aug. 31) is \$14.95 for 6 issues/year. (1-800-557-9469.)

- AEA (Advanced Electronic Applications) has a new website: <http://www.aeainc.com>

And look for the new Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) web pages at: <http://www.rsgb.org>

- **Great Britain will withdraw its 934 MHz Citizens' Band Radio service effective December 31, 1998.** No new 934 MHz CB transceivers have been certified, imported or manufactured in the UK since 1988. The 934 MHz band will eventually be used for commercial digital telephone service. The UK's 27 MHz CB service will continue to be available.

- The Personal Radio Steering Group, a GMRS advocacy group, filed a *Petition for Reconsideration* with the FCC on July 5th. **PRSG asks the FCC to reconsider its new Family Radio Service rules.** They contend that the current FRS rules do not preclude FRS repeaters, do not bar music or other sound effects, do not prohibit obscene or indecent

language ...and do not even prohibit transmitting false international distress calls. PRSG believes the FCC should limit transmission time and require pre-transmission monitoring.

FRS is a new unlicensed, low power (half watt), short range UHF personal radio service designed to meet the communication needs of families and groups. Small business, however, may also use FRS. The service will use 14 frequencies located in between full power GMRS 462/467 MHz channels.

- **Toby Metz, KB7UIM, has been named 1996's "Young Ham of the Year."** The 16 year-old is from Meridian, Idaho. The award is jointly sponsored by Bill Pasternak's (WA6ITF) Amateur Radio Newslite, Yaesu USA and CQ Magazine.

Metz, who recently moved to California was selected based on his work with the deaf to introduce them to Amateur Radio. Toby said that his involvement with the Boise deaf community came as the result of a scouting project that quickly became a public service.

"We began talking about the possible ways that the deaf might use ham radio and realized that packet radio would be natural for them." Toby decided to start a ham radio training class for the deaf. "At first we started off with three people but the class became larger when family members decided to come as well."

Toby Metz's Eagle Scout project was a major success and drew praise from the handicapped community in Boise. In addition to his work with the deaf, Toby assisted in the creation of a Ham Radio Explorer Scout Post in Meridian, Idaho and spent over a year hosting an on-air discussion group known as the "Discovery Net."

Nominated by Rich Dees (AA7WG) of Meridian, Idaho, Toby Metz will receive his award the evening of Aug. 17th at the Huntsville Hamfest Grand Banquet.

- **Shuttle astronaut Ken Cameron (Colonel, USMC) (KB5AWP) will leave NASA on August 5th to pursue other career interests.** Cameron, selected as an astronaut in 1984 and a three-time Shuttle flight veteran, will join Hughes Training, Inc., as Executive Director, Houston Operations. Cameron first flew as pilot on STS-37 in 1991 and served as commander on two subsequent missions, STS-56 in 1993 and STS-74 in 1995. Cameron holds an Advanced Class ham ticket.

- **The prestigious 1996 Horkheimer Prize has been awarded to AMSAT-DL President Dr. Karl Meinzer, DJ4ZC,** at the Friedrichshafen ham radio convention in Germany. The prize is awarded to mem-

bers of an IARU Amateur Radio society by the Deutscher Amateur Radio Club (DARC is the German national ham society) for long term meritorious amateur radio service. It is named after Rudolf Horkheimer, one of the first radioamateurs in Germany.

- On July 10th, the Foundation for Amateur Radio (FAR) announced winners of the **56 scholarships** which it administers. The awards, which ranged in value from \$500 to \$2,000 each, were open to all licensed radioamateurs meeting the qualifications and residence requirements of the various sponsors. Announcement of the 1997 scholarships will be made at year end. Additional info: FAR Scholarships, 6903 Rhode Island Ave., College Park, MD 20740.)

- Look for **special event station NN3SI operating from the Smithsonian Institution** between 1400-2100 UTC August 10 and 11. It will be commemorating the Smithsonian's 150th Anniversary and operate from the National Museum of American History. (Check 7.250, 14.250, 18.150 MHz phone ...and 20/40 meter CW - including 7100-7150 MHz.) A special certificate/QSL is available.

A little trivia from Elliot Sivowitch, K3RJA: James Smithson (1765-1829), a British scientist named a nephew in his will - but stipulated that, should the nephew die without heirs (as he did in 1835) the estate would go to the United States to establish the Smithsonian Institution "...for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

The United States received the Smithsonian estate in the form of bags of gold worth \$515,169 in 1838 from a British court. Now 77% funded by Congress, the Smithsonian has an annual budget of \$479 million and a permanent staff of 6,700 ...plus 4,800 volunteers.

It houses some 141 million specimens and artifacts. More than 25 million people visit the free Smithsonian every year. On August 10, 1946 (150 years ago), an *Act of Congress* signed by President James K. Polk established the Smithsonian Institution. Its amateur station NN3SI has been in operation since the Bicentennial, 1976. (Thanks: K3RJA)

- **A question has been raised as to whether the Phase 3D Amateur Radio Satellite is insured in the event of a launch failure.** The answer is "No." The total cost needed to build and launch P3D has not yet been raised and no funds are available for launch insurance. Phase 3D is scheduled to fly later on this fall on the second test of the Ariane 5 rocket. The first test resulted in failure and the rocket had to be destroyed.

WAYNE GREEN FILES PERSONAL BANKRUPTCY

Personal Chapter 7 follows WGI Business Bankruptcy

A month after Wayne Green, Inc., filed for *business* bankruptcy, Wayne S. Green, W2NSD/1 filed a voluntary petition for *individual* bankruptcy under Chapter 7 (Case No. 96-11840 JEY). While the paperwork was date stamped July 3, 1996, by the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Hampshire, Green signed the petition on June 28. All documents filed with the court are available for public inspection.

Chapter 7 is designed for people and businesses in financial difficulty who do not have the ability to pay their existing bills. Under Chapter 7, a trustee takes possession of all your property ...part of which (such as clothing) you may claim as exempt. In Green's case, the trustee is a Jeffrey Schreiber of Danvers, MA. The trustee's job is to turn non-exempt property into money.

The purpose of filing a Chapter 7 case is to obtain a discharge of your existing debts. If, however, you are found to have committed certain kinds of improper conduct described in the Bankruptcy Code, your discharge may be denied by the court, and the purpose for which you filed the bankruptcy petition will be defeated. A discharge means that certain debts can not and need not be repaid. Even if you receive a discharge, however, there are some debts (such as certain governmental taxes) that can not be discharged under the law.

Chapter 13 bankruptcy is for individuals with a regular income who wish to make installments on their debts over an extended period of time ...usually three to five years. And Chapter 11 provides for the reorganization of a business.

W2NSD/1 is, of course, the well-known "El Supremo" and founder of *73 Amateur Radio* magazine. Depending upon whose version you believe, he was 73's publisher and owner up until a year or so ago. "El Supremo" is a title coined by Green to indicate that he is in charge. While he may be in charge, he no longer owns the publication.

Although not stated on the masthead, the magazine is now owned by his third wife, Sherry Smythe-Green. There is a major controversy as to when the sale took place ...and whether Green transferred the publication to her to avoid the payment of back wage judgements (totaling over \$28,000) awarded to two previous employees (a Judith Walker and a Linda Drew.)

Walker's attorney has filed a "*Complaint Objecting to Discharge of the Debtor*" with the court. Green now has to come up with convincing such as certified or notarized legal documents supporting his contention that the publication was 25% sold to his wife in late 1993 ...with the balance transferred to her in April of 1994.

Income: Green's "*Statement of Financial Affairs*"

shows that his income from employment for the 1994 calendar year was \$46,153.86 ...and nothing for 1995.

According to a "*Current Income*" schedule, his current income is \$1,470 a month. He has received only Social Security income since January 1995 (\$16,800 a year) and an unspecified annual "Disability income" of \$840.00. His monthly expenses total \$2,871.

There was a question as to the legitimacy of his receiving social security payments when his wife owns and profits from the magazine where her husband works without any compensation. But this is totally legal since Green is over age 70, the entitlement age regardless of earnings.

Judgements: Numerous business judgements against Wayne Green, Inc. (labor disputes, small claims actions, suits for non-payment) are listed on his personal bankruptcy. The exact amounts are not listed in the bankruptcy petition. Green's business bankruptcy shows an unsecured debt to Cinram, Inc. (an Indiana compact disk manufacturer) of \$34,354.96. Confusingly, a judgement (Cause No. 89C01-CP-108 in Wayne Circuit County Court, Richmond, IN) is listed as \$234,354.96 - a \$200,000 increase. There is no indication as to why the big difference. Is this a typo?

Assets: He shows two closed bank checking accounts, (each with less than a \$20.00 balance), clothing (\$500 market value) and an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) worth \$4,545.29. Total assets: \$5,045.29

Liabilities: Although a business transaction, Green lists a creditor (U.S. Optical Disk, Sanford, Maine) as having a claim of \$134,604.01 against him which is secured by an 8,400 sq. ft. commercial building located on Route 202 in Peterborough, N.H.

It is reported that this debt was actually a secured loan to Green to help pay off his IRS back taxes. Supposedly, Green and his previous general manager personally guaranteed the note. That building, originally scheduled to be sold at public auction on July 17 to the highest bidder has now been rescheduled for August 30.

Unsecured creditors total \$877,720.13 - including \$246,475.85 owed to his wife, Sherry Green for "revolving loans and rent." A creditor's meeting has been scheduled for August 9th at the Federal Building in Manchester, NH.

An Internal Revenue Service "civil penalty assessment" and two other employment related tax debts total \$29,231.86.

Strangely, many of the same judgements and creditors are listed on both his personal and business Chapter 7 bankruptcies ...probably due to business debts which legally revert to him personally. In any event, the petition shows \$1,041,556 in total liabilities.

(Excerpted from: July 3rd, Voluntary petition filed under Chapter 7, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of New Hampshire, Manchester, NH.)